

Living Water

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Editor's Note

These are carried into the pdf

Please note in respect of issue **No. 85** that the following corrections need to be made:

Page iii – The date should read "January – February 2008"

Page 1 – The third line of the last paragraph of the editor's note should read: "over the years I give thanks to God that in His grace He has seen to"

Page 22 – The highlighting on this page relates to the article on page 21

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Recent Ministry

IT HAPPENED AT MID-DAY

Mark 15:33-34

Acts 26:8-16

Acts 10:9-16

I want to speak about some of the things that the Bible says happened at mid-day—the sixth hour. If God tells us the time, it must be important for us.

“And when the sixth hour was come, there came darkness over the whole land...”

In the verses read in Mark’s gospel, the hours referred to direct our thoughts to Jesus on the cross. From the third to the sixth hour Jesus was hanging on the cross as an object of shame and mocking, and in physical suffering and pain under the full heat of the sun. Then, “when the sixth hour was come”, there came darkness blotting out even the mid-day sun. This was an hour of which there was no like before or since, nor ever will be, when Jesus, the Son of God, hung there alone upon the cross. It teaches us the real meaning of His coming “into the world to save sinners”.

Why did God forsake His Son?

During those three hours of darkness Jesus was forsaken, not only by the disciples but, more significantly, by His God, for at the end of those three hours Jesus cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me”. Why did God forsake His Son? It was because during those three hours of darkness Jesus became the sin offering before God. God forsook His Son during that time because, as Psalm 22:3 indicates, God is holy and He hates sin. Isaiah says that He (Jesus) “was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5). Truly He was forsaken so that we might be forgiven and so that you and I might never know the awfulness of being forsaken by God and spending eternity away from His presence.

What a wonderful Saviour Jesus is! The apostle Paul says, "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). That is what happened at that sixth hour! The holy Lamb of God, our sins were laid upon Him and He was there in our place, to make atonement for our sins.

At the end of these three hours, Jesus cried with a loud voice, "It is finished". That was a tremendous cry, for it meant that Jesus had glorified God and had paid the full price and penalty for our sins, so that we might be forgiven. Yes, because of that sixth hour and all that followed, we sinners can be freely forgiven, cleansed and reconciled to God, and be sure of a home in heaven.

The cross was not the end, for Jesus triumphed over sin, over Satan, over death and the grave. He rose again, ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God, a living Saviour for all who trust in Him!

"...at mid-day, on the way, I saw, O king, a light above the brightness of the sun..."

I read of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. This also happened at mid-day. Saul was a persecutor of christians, trying to remove the precious name of Jesus from this earth, and to put to death those who believed in Him. Yet as he travelled to Damascus a bright light shone around him – a light above the brightness of the mid-day sun. There was One greater than Saul, greater than the mid-day sun, greater than you and me. That One not only shone around Saul, but He spoke to him. It was Jesus saying, "Saul...why persecutest thou me?" What a moment in Saul's life when he realised that Jesus was alive in heaven, and was speaking to him to save him.

Saul was broken down, not by an angry God, but by a gracious loving Saviour

Saul was broken down, not by an angry God, but by a gracious loving Saviour who really cared for him and loved him. Saul could write later, "the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for

me" (Galatians 2:20). Can you say that? It is truly wonderful to have to do with Jesus and to feel the light of heaven filling your soul, and to know through faith in Jesus that your sins are gone and that your life is changed. That is conversion, and for Saul it meant a complete change from being an enemy of the Lord to becoming one of His greatest servants and preachers of the gospel.

What a wonderful gospel Paul preached! He called it "My gospel". He had made it his own. He believed it, he had experienced it and he had proved the power of the risen Christ to change his life. He had learnt in that mid-day encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road, that Jesus is greater than all and he bowed the knee to Jesus and confessed Him as Lord of his life. Later he was to write that soon "every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to God the Father's glory" (Philippians 2:9-11). To confess Him now as your Saviour and Lord is to receive God's eternal salvation and blessing.

"Peter went up on the house to pray, about the sixth hour"

Acts chapter 10 tells us of a vision given to the apostle Peter. God is a Saviour God who desires all men to be saved, and He was going to send Peter to open the door of salvation for us gentiles, but before that could happen, Peter had some lessons to learn, just like us, for he had very strict religious prejudices which were not in accord with heaven at this moment.

Peter had gone up on the rooftop to pray, and he sees the heaven opened. God wanted him (as He wants us) to know what is suited to heaven! What Peter sees is a great sheet, let down from heaven, full of wild beasts, creeping things and birds of the air, and he is told to "slay and eat", but he refused, stating his Jewish rules about what he could and could not eat. Peter did not realise at first that God was seeking to teach him about people, not about food for his stomach, so he refused, but was told, "What God has cleansed do not thou make common or unclean". Three times this was stated before the sheet was taken back into heaven. The sheet was really a picture of men and

women, sinners who have been forgiven and cleansed and thus made fit for heaven. Is that true of you and me?

There is only one remedy for sin and that is the precious blood of Jesus, and God reaches out to us. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). All you have ever thought, or said, or done can be washed away, and you can be made white as snow.

Thank God for the blood of Jesus, which "cleanses us from all sin" and makes us fit for heaven and for the company that is there. That is what Peter learnt at this sixth hour. All his prejudices have to go, for there will not be any special groups or labels up there, for everyone that is cleansed by Jesus' blood is precious to God.

I commend my Saviour to you tonight, praying that you might trust in Him and know for yourself the wonder of His grace to change your life completely, the power of His cleansing blood and the present joy of Christian fellowship with those God has cleansed.

Brian Parr

A preaching of the gospel, Lytham St Annes, 2007.

Poetry Selection

WHAT WILL IT BE?

What will it be, when all the toil is ended,
And we have conquered in the last fierce strife,
When the bright portals of our home are entered,
Pilgrims no longer – heirs of endless life!

What will it be, when the effulgent glory
Of day eternal it is ours to see?
When for the first time in our life's short story
Free from all trace of sin our ways shall be.

What will it be amid the choirs of heaven,
Our voices mingle in the songs of praise?
Praise to the Lamb, whose blood for us was given,
Whose is the power through everlasting days.

What will it be to know our perfect union
With Him we love, when faith has turned to sight?
Our souls set free for unrestrained communion,
Dwelling with God in His transcendent light.

What will it be, to hear the voice of Jesus?
"Draw near, ye blessed". How sweet His words shall be.
Oh richly then that hand of love will bless us;
We shall the King in all His beauty see!

What will it be to see the hidden meaning
Of every trial we have to meet below?
To trace the secret of our Father's training,
Where faith gained spoil from many a vanquished foe?

What will it be! Oh! What no thought hath measured,
No eye hath seen, no ear of man hath heard.
Unsearchable the riches Christ hath treasured,
Yet all is sure to those who trust His word.

On then, though rough and dark the path, and dreary;
All toil and pain the end will well repay.
Onward and upward! We may now be weary;
With Jesus soon, to share His home for aye.

Hannah K. Burlingham

THE COMING OF THE LORD

Thou art coming, glorious Saviour,
Coming for Thine own;
Full Thy joy when Thou wilt have us
There at home.

Thou art coming, quickly coming,
Lord, we soon shall trace,
All Thy beauty, all Thy glory
In Thy face.

Thou art coming, Jesus, Saviour,
We shall soon arise;
Caught up by Thee, we shall meet Thee,
In the skies.

R. Casselli (22nd April 1935)

Testimony Section

CAN A MUSLIM KNOW FOR SURE?

Dear Muslim Friend

Allow me to introduce myself to you. My name is Joseph Abraham – Previously Mahmoud Kamal El-deen Mujahed. Having come to the truth after many years of searching, I believe God is leading me to share with others what He has done for me through the Bible. Please be patient in reading my letter.

I am Egyptian by birth, born in a Muslim home. My father was a Muslim priest (sheikh) and a teacher of Islam in Cairo, Egypt, until his death. My family took pride in their Islamic heritage, for almost all my ancestors were Muslim clergy. In the early years of my life I was looked upon as a future Muslim priest. Therefore my family sent me to a Quranic school from the age of six or seven.

When I was still very young I started asking questions about God, His judgment, His truth, man's eternal destiny and the like. Since I was only a child, my questions brought mockery from others. Such treatment did not help but only discouraged me. I lived in despair and hopelessness because my soul was seeking something which Islam did not provide.

My Islamic background was rather shallow and superficial. My father, as a sheikh, memorised almost all the Quran and encouraged me to do the same, whether I understood it or not. Thus I became a mechanically religious young boy, while my heart was dry, like a desert that seemed endless and hopeless. Like most Muslims, I lived

I was taught that the Christians had corrupted the 'original' Bible

in a traditional Muslim neighbourhood, where I heard the thundering voice of the calls to worship Allah five times a day. We celebrated the Islamic holidays religiously. I was taught that Islam was the final religion, which cancelled Judaism and Christianity, and that Christians worship three gods. I was taught that the Christians had corrupted the 'original' Bible, which, supposedly, once contained references to the prophets of Islam. Islam also denies the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But there was never a serious attempt to explain the grounds for such claims.

When I reached my teens the desire to know which religion is true grew in me. Because questioning Islam is not tolerated in a Muslim nation, my questions and investigations were pursued on a private basis but later many found out about my curiosity. They threw harsh accusations at me: I was called 'mentally unstable' and an idiot. Still others claimed that I was under the influence of an anti-Islam organisation. Muslims made my life so intolerable that I wished to die. All I wanted to know was the truth.

In my early twenties I started searching again. Among the questions that concerned me were: 'Where will I go when I die?' 'Don't I have the right to know my eternal destiny?' Why do Muslims so strongly reject the discussing of their own religion? 'Does God want people to be blind to their destiny?' 'How can I know that Islam is the only true religion?' Having no help from anyone, I began to read books about philosophy and psychology, some of which promoted atheism, but denying God never silenced the inward seeking to know the truth. I was encouraged to hold to fatalism and apathy, but that made things worse. My soul still desperately sought the ultimate reality of our spiritual destiny and God's eternal truth

It bothered me to realise that I was considered a Muslim just because I was born to Muslim parents and lived in a Muslim nation. No choice was given me: no chance was offered me to examine and find the truth. Worst of all, many Muslims (including my own family) were Muslims simply by heritage. I hardly ever saw any Muslims making a serious and diligent attempt to investigate their religion with hearts opened to the truth.

In 1968 while I was reading a certain book, I ran into some verses from the Bible, which greatly attracted me. These verses spoke with authority about a Man whose name was Jesus Christ. This Man said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6).

Dozens of questions jammed my head: 'Then what about the prophet of Islam?' 'Why do Muslims never speak of Jesus Christ in this manner?' (They always speak of the prophet of Islam.) 'Who is the "Father"?' 'How can God be called, "Father"?' 'Who is His wife?' 'What about Islam, which claims to be the ultimate truth?' 'How can I trust the Bible, which Muslims claim is corrupted?' And many more.

While reading more of the same book, I came to other statements about Jesus Christ, who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). I had sought rest for many years and this Jesus claimed to be the

source of rest and invited others to come to Him. At that time I had never had a Bible; I had never seen one. Then secretly I asked a christian to lend me a Bible so I could read more about this Man who claims such authority.

About the same time I had heard about an American evangelist who was visiting Egypt. With great eagerness I sneaked secretly into a Protestant church to hear his message from the Bible. Because he knew no Arabic, he spoke through an interpreter. I heard things I had never heard before. I had never realised that the Bible is the record of God's eternal truth.

In the past I had read and memorised passages from the Quran. I learned Islam for years but God never spoke to me through its teachings. In contrast, when I read verses or heard messages from the Bible, there was a different voice, speaking a different message with a different authority.

I gathered the courage to go forward and ask the preacher to tell me more about Christ and the Bible. I asked him if a Muslim

**secretly I asked
a christian to
lend me a Bible**

could also have access to the Bible and the heavenly Father. Could I, too, know for sure about eternal life, forgiveness of sin, escape from hell, and becoming a child of God? The preacher shared with me John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten

Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life". This verse alone has the answer to all religions. God sent His Son to die on our behalf because of the sin of all mankind. It takes only believing this truth to escape eternal hell. God did that out of love and the goodness of His heart but also because He is a righteous judge. The judgment of God requires a penalty for sin, "The wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23). But God is merciful, which is why He gives us the alternative: "...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The simple truth was too good to be true – but it is true because it is God's word. I could not ignore God's call to me – 'Come,

come, come'. "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 3:7-8). The more I read and heard quotations from the Bible, the more I became convinced that God was speaking to me personally.

**I could not ignore
God's call to me –
'Come, come, come'**

God's word continued to address my heart. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3)? There is no escape from God's eternal judgment on sinful men unless they come to acknowledge who Jesus Christ is and what He did for them. God gave a warning in case I hesitated to believe His word: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). That simply means that tomorrow can be too late. To reject Christ as Saviour brings the judgment of God, who provided His Son to take our place on the cross at Calvary. Does it matter what all other religions teach? No! Why? Because God's eternal truth does not change.

Finally, after years of agony I was led to the truth, the Lord – my Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God; He is the truth; He is the giver of life; He is the only way of Salvation.

Dear Muslim friend, remember you will stand some day before the throne of God, just by yourself. Will you be able to stand God's judgment?

Christians – those who trust Christ as their Saviour – are no longer under God's judgment, because God has already judged them in the Person of Christ. He died for them. Well, He died for you too. Now may I ask you, what would stop you from telling God right now that you are a sinner and that you want Christ to save you? Trust Him as your Saviour right now. Then there will be joy in heaven for the salvation of your precious soul.

I searched for the truth for years until God reached out of heaven and sent His servant the preacher to lead me to Christ. God is working that way now. You, too, can know the truth and enjoy the same spiritual freedom I have. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Dear Muslim friend, come and join us in the spiritual freedom we have in Christ our Lord and let us hear from you so that we can rejoice with you.

Sincerely Joseph Abraham

A Voice from the Past

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN? Part 2

Continuing the series on the features that mark the true believer

In the first article of this series a christian was shown to be a person who is:

Born again

Forgiven

Justified and

has peace with God

In this article Dr. Elliott continues to show from the Bible some further features of the true christian.

A CHRISTIAN HAS THE HOLY SPIRIT. The gift of the Holy Spirit is one of the most important features of christianity. Before the death and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit did not dwell in believers. It is true that the Holy Spirit came upon believers; so also the prophets and others were inspired to write the Scriptures and to prophesy. David, for instance, was inspired to sing and write Psalms, and he enjoyed this so much that he once prayed, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me", when confessing a serious sin he had committed; but it is clear that the Lord Jesus was proposing something entirely new when He said: "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. ...he dwelleth with you and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17).

The apostle Paul also says: "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). The gift of the Spirit is for all who have believed the gospel of a

risen and glorified Christ, and it is normal for every believer to receive the Spirit, though we must remember that the Spirit is the sovereign gift of God, and the time of giving the Spirit to any individual must be in His hands. Peter, in his first gospel preaching, said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost".

The Holy Spirit is God's seal upon the believer. Just as a farmer

places a certain mark on his sheep to distinguish them as his property, so God seals the believer with the Holy Spirit to mark him off as His possession. The

Just as a farmer places a certain mark on his sheep to distinguish them as his property, so God seals the believer with the Holy Spirit

Spirit is also the earnest in our hearts of all that we possess in heaven; we can then have a foretaste of what we shall enjoy in the future.

The Spirit never ceases to dwell in the believer on earth, and an intelligent christian will not pray as David did, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me". Everyone intelligently understanding the New Testament will be certain as to this, but if anyone asks for a definite scripture on the subject let him read Ephesians 4:30: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption". It does not say that the Spirit will leave us if we grieve Him, but rather that we must be most careful in our conduct in order not to grieve Him, because He always dwells in us. If we grieve Him, He does not leave us, but He will work with us in order to bring us back to the right path again! If we do not grieve Him, He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts (Romans 5: 5), teaches us (John 14: 26), bears witness of Christ (John 15: 26), leads us into all the truth (John 16: 13), and can fill us so as to equip us for the service of God (Acts 6: 3).

A CHRISTIAN IS RECONCILED TO GOD. Sometimes it is thought that every believer obtains every spiritual blessing as soon as they are converted, and this is true if by it we mean that he has everything in Christ, but it is not correct if by it we mean that they enjoy all the blessings as soon as they are converted. There is a work of God in the soul required to enable us to enjoy every new blessing, and the Holy Spirit works in us to that end. God promised the whole of the land of Canaan to the Israelites and, in fact, gave it to them, but when they were on the point of entering the land, God said to Joshua: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you" (Joshua 1:3). It is necessary to step forward and, as it were, to place our feet on every blessing, one by one, if we want to enjoy them. We shall also meet opposers. Satan will contest every inch of the ground, and although he cannot rob us of an inheritance in heaven, yet he can rob us of our present enjoyment and prevent us from taking possession practically of our heavenly blessings.

What does it mean to be reconciled to God? Well, Scripture presents the truth of reconciliation in connection with the death of Christ. Everything connected with us in our lost estate as enemies of God and alienated from God has been dealt with in the death of Christ. All has been removed from the eye of God in that death, and as we come to realize what has been done, and come into the good of what has been effected by God, the practical result is that our feelings of enmity to God disappear. We receive the reconciliation (Romans 5:11).

A CHRISTIAN IS BROUGHT TO GOD. The parable of the prodigal son provides us with one of the best illustrations of a sinner being brought to God. When the prodigal son left his father's house, his heart was already estranged from his father. Yet there was no feeling of enmity on the part of the father against him. When he came to himself, and returned to his father, he was clothed with unsuitable garments, and in no way suited to sit at table with his father. When his father kissed him he knew well that he was forgiven but he was not yet at home; but when he was clothed in the best robe, with a ring on his finger and sandals

**God disapproves of our sin
but cherishes no feeling of
enmity against us**

on his feet, he would feel quite at ease to sit at table with his father. It was then that the father could find his pleasure in him and initiate the merry-making. On the one hand, the son had lost

all his previous feelings of enmity and distance, because he had learnt that there were no feelings of enmity in the heart of his father and, on the other hand, the father could have joy and satisfaction with reference to him, in place of having to express disapproval of his ways.

So it is in the case of God and the sinner; God disapproves of our sin but cherishes no feeling of enmity against us. This is learned in the gospel, in which God makes known His attitude towards men, and in which He shows that He is willing to save all, that there is forgiveness in His heart for all, and that He waits to embrace every repentant sinner.

Thus we learn first what God is toward us, but there is something more necessary, namely, to learn what we are in the sight of God. Through the death of His Son, God has removed everything out of the way which stands connected with the "flesh" and the "first Adam", and it is through this removal by death that we are reconciled to God. We are, moreover, brought into actual favour in Christ, and if this is apprehended, we can, like the prodigal, sit down in God's presence with restfulness and confidence, because we are conscious that He finds His pleasure in us clothed with the best robe. The best robe speaks to us of Christ, for it is only what is of Christ that can be pleasing to God. In 2 Corinthians 5 we get a further thought, namely, that if any man is in Christ there is new creation, and in that new creation God can see no fault, for it is His own work.

A CHRISTIAN IS ONE OF GOD'S CHILDREN. Thus far we have looked at the christian mainly as an individual. God begins with us as individuals, and gives us to understand our individual

blessings first, but it is not His intention that the christian should remain alone. All that God does for and in the individual is with a view to our taking up our proper place with reference to other believers.

We must necessarily learn our individual blessing first, but when the question of soul-anxiety is settled, and we have learned to regard ourselves as no longer connected with the first Adam, but as being in Christ, the last Adam, then we are prepared to go further, and to learn that God has brought us into a family. It is in this way He has shown His wonderful love to us; we are called the children of God (1 John 3:1). How wonderful to be one of the children of God! As such, "the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not", and as soon as we understand and enjoy our place as children of God, we realize that we are in the midst of a world of persons who are of an entirely different nature to what is of God in us, and because we are the children of God, the world is against us and hates us. If a christian does not apprehend this great blessing and the privileges connected with it, he will not experience the opposition of the world so acutely, and it is on this account that we see so often the sad sight of a christian content to go on with the world.

It is also necessary to draw attention to the fact that the world does not only consist of what is outwardly bad—that side of it is avoided by almost all christians; but there is that which is more deceitful, that which has the appearance of being christian and yet it is of the world. Christians are placed in the midst of this world as the children of God in order to display the character of God their Father, and the more truly they do this, the more they will feel the opposition of the world's circle; but nevertheless they rejoice and are happy because they enjoy the love of God and await their reward in heaven.

Intimately connected with the thought of being children of God is the thought of being sons of God, but the two things are not the same. The thought of being sons is one of the highest blessings brought to light in christianity: "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba,

Father" (Galatians 4:6). Regarded as children, our place is here on earth surrounded by enemies; regarded as sons, we are being led to glory, and we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son.

A.A.Elliott

To be continued

THE PROBLEM OF INFIDEL THOUGHTS

Sometimes infidel thoughts arise in our minds and trouble us greatly. We may be the Lord's and have confessed His name, and yet have doubts arising. If that is so for you I would seek to encourage you for the Lord knows even our most secret thoughts.

I would suggest that first of all you remember that your mind is that of a fallen creature, and as such is susceptible to all manner of evil influences. We find ourselves in the world, and though we have light and the truth of God shining upon us, yet we have to face the fact that we have the flesh in us and are therefore liable to evil thoughts. At some time or other every one of us must have listened to something that has poisoned us, or have read some books that have suggested to our minds infidel thoughts.

These things the devil uses to sow seeds in our minds, and these in their turn produce a harvest of thoughts that are often infidel in character. These are realities. We know that there are many teachers in the world today who are openly and deliberately preaching infidel doctrine, and that we possess minds that are capable of being influenced by it

What is the answer to it all? It is faith in God, for "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:5). I would urge anyone who is troubled with thoughts like this to get alone with God, and pour them out into the ear of the only One to whom you can tell them, the ear

of the One who loves you perfectly. He will hear, and He has given us the Holy Spirit, who by His divine power can bring us under the direct influence of God, for “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” .

Satan began his work of instilling infidel thoughts into the heart of man very early. Right back in the garden of Eden at the beginning he came to the woman and said, “Yea, hath God said?” He raised a doubt as to the goodness of God, and he is still doing it today. The devil has to a great extent captured the educational system of the world, and is flooding it with poisoned literature, many teachers going out of their way to teach infidelity. In the midst of it all, do you wonder that there are those who are apparently sound on the surface, but who are cherishing infidel thoughts as to God?

In view of this state of things, I would urge you to get into the presence of God and ask Him for divine light, so that you may be established by that light. Take your Bible and open it, asking God to instruct you, and let your soul by waiting on Him be established. Remember, that it is true for your mind as well as for your body that “They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength”.

F. S. Marsh

A Word for Today

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

Bearing our sins

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree...by whose stripes ye were healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

“All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6)

Much help is needed in to speak about the sufferings of Christ—

it is a holy and very affecting matter. Here is where we can all begin, that is, in relation to our sins. Peter says, "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree." How much that statement means to all of us who are forgiven, that our sins were borne in Christ's body on the tree!

That body was not a body like ours in which we have committed sins. Christ's body was holy, inherently pure, there was nothing corrupt in it, it was never used for any other purpose than the will of God; it was unique. Everything He did was for the divine will and pleasure, whether it be His feet treading the path of the will of God in a suffering way, accustomed to the hardships of human life into which He came; whether it be the hands that ministered, hands lifted up to serve His God as no other hands had been lifted up. No hands like that had been lifted up in the temple in service to God before; they were holy hands. Then, those hands ministered to humanity. He freely touched persons in their diseases and served them. No hands had ever ministered like that before. Priests like Moses or Aaron had employed hands but never were hands employed in relieving and blessing people as were the hands of Jesus.

Then His lips never spoke an evil word and His eyes never rested on an unholy object. He came in contact with unholiness but it never defiled Him; His eye never looked towards an unholy object. Alas, ours have! His voice was never used in any unholy purpose, every word sanctified, every word holy and pure. What delight God had in that Person and in that body used sacrificially, devotedly, wholly for His pleasure, for His will, for His service, for His ministry to men!

Yet in that body our sins were borne. The sufferings of Christ are not a myth; they are not an artificial subject, they are a real subject. Our sins were a real thing to Christ on the cross, in that ignominious position, and our sins were borne in His body. What means were required, for removal of our sins! He bore them on the tree, everyone of them! Think of all our sins borne in the body of Jesus on the tree! How lightly we think of forgiveness, how lightly we think of sins, how lightly we commit them! Yet

every sin committed by believers was borne by Jesus.

Unbelievers' sins are not borne in Christ's body on the tree. Propitiation has been made for the sins of all, and on the basis of that God can offer forgiveness to all, but the sins of believers were borne by Christ on the tree—this is substitution. How

Unbelievers' sins are not borne in Christ's body on the tree

astounding! How amazing! What a dreadful thing our sins were, that such means should have to be resorted to in such a glorious and holy Person as Jesus, that they should be borne in His body on the tree in order that they might be removed and the judgment due to them exhausted. Every one of our sins Jesus felt, every one was borne in His body on the tree. How it would make us loathe sins! How careful it would make us in the exercise of our own will! How our affections would be drawn out to Christ! What cause there is to love Him—love Him much, as the woman in Luke 7. She was forgiven much and she loved much. She understood something of what it cost that forgiveness should come to her from God in relation to her guilt and sins, the means that had to be resorted to in divine arrangement that her sins should be borne in Christ's body on the tree for their removal. What grace led Him to the cross!

We cannot enter into the holy shrankings of Jesus. Would that we understood Gethsemane a little more and all He faced there as He approached that moment of Calvary's woe and sufferings in which that transaction was about to take place! How He could say, "Father, save me from this hour". He was to take on Himself the loathsome thing, sins, and yet He took them on and bore our sins in His body on the tree. We shall never have to bear them. We shall never have to come eternally under the weight and the judgment and the awfulness of our sins. What it meant to Christ, that holy Person, in His body, in His feelings! Every sensibility He had was pure and holy. He shrank from sins, and yet He took my sins on, bore them in His body in order that they might be removed and that we might be forgiven.

Now I refer to Isaiah, which links with this passage. I suppose the Spirit of God used Isaiah 53 in the epistle of Peter. We have another thing brought forward in Isaiah: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way." What a multitude of ways are represented here. We had all taken our own way. He never took His own way; He was the only One who had a right to take His own way because of who He was in His Person, but in the dependence and subjection of manhood He went God's way. He never went astray, never once in that life, whether early or advanced, whether in private life or home life or ministry. What a life that was for God! It was a life pure and blameless whatever the circumstances were—and they were never rosy, but were always hard and difficult and led through the way of suffering, yet He never went His own way. Alas, every one of us has gone our own way. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way". That is responsibility; you cannot evade it, I cannot evade it. We have turned every one to his own way; the element of responsibility is in that verse and no one can exclude themselves from it. Yet He never went His own way. He said, "Not my will but thine be done". Every morning He received the divine word as to the way He should go, yet in His Person, God. What a mystery that He was God here in the form of a Man and as Man in the way of dependence, waiting on God for guidance in the way He should go! Yet we have turned everyone to our own way.

What has happened? "Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all". What a load! Can any of us tell how many times we went astray? It is a characteristic thing for us to go astray, to love our will, to do what we like and love to do what we like and refuse to do what God wills. Yet we have Jesus who always did what God willed and brought His way in absolute submission to the will of God and guidance of God. What a load He bore! What strength of endurance, what might there was in Jesus to bear the iniquity of us all! What grace, what submission, what love to God's will that He should be there to do that, to bear the iniquity of us all! What we owe to Christ! What we owe to God for giving Christ, but what we owe to Christ for what He has done! Let us never belittle

what He has done. It is never out of place, wherever it is spoken of, to speak of what Christ has done. We should have liberty to speak about it anywhere, to speak about it in the service of God.

What submission there was with Him as He accepted it from God! What He has done for us, dear brethren! Do we not love Him? Do not our hearts surge up in love to Christ at this very moment as the Spirit of God bears in on our consciences and hearts what Christ has done for us? He bore our sins in His own body, a body in which no ill or sin or iniquity was ever taken on save on the cross, and yet He took our sins on His body. "Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all". What power, what might in the Saviour to sustain it! Could anyone else in the universe sustain it? No one; not angelic beings with their might and strength but the power was there in Christ to bear our iniquity that God laid upon Him. All the enormity of the iniquity was laid upon Jesus.

He was there for you and me; otherwise He would not have been there at all. There was nothing in Himself to take Him there, but He was there for you and for me. "Jehovah laid on him the iniquity of us all"—all the host of the redeemed—think of the magnitude of it! His work is as inscrutable as His Person, blessed be His name! Our hearts rise in thanksgiving at this very time for what He has done for us.

Made sin for us

"...three hundred and ninety days...thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, thou shalt lie again on thy right side and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days...And behold I lay bands upon thee and thou shalt not turn thyself from side to side...

"...and make thee bread thereof according to the number of the days that thou liest upon thy side...and thou shalt eat it by weight, twenty shekels a day...And thou shalt drink water by measure, the sixth part of a hin. And thou shalt eat it as barley cake and thou shalt bake it in their sight with dung that cometh out of man...

“Then said I, Ah, Lord Jehovah! Behold my soul hath not been defiled and from my youth up even until now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself...neither came abominable flesh into my mouth. And he said unto me, See, I have given thee cow’s dung for man’s dung and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith”

Ezekiel 4:4-15

“Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God’s righteousness in him” **2 Corinthians 5:21**

In Ezekiel and in the passage in 2 Corinthians we get Christ as made sin. This was far more than just the bearing of our sins.

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Ezekiel is the nearest type, or picture, that we have in the Old Testament to Christ in His vicarious sufferings. There are other types of Christ personally, such as David, and in the inauguration of things we have Moses in relation to

authority; but Ezekiel is a type of Christ in His vicarious work. He lies on his side 390 days and then turns over and lies on his other side forty days—it is so far beyond human endurance! To lie 390 days on one side and not move, for God put bands on him, and to eat his bread by measure, drink his water by measure, and bake his bread in the dung of cattle. It means that Christ appropriated my sinful condition when He was made sin by God on the cross. Can we think what that means, as we think of that holy One, Jesus? Never did an unholy thought enter His mind; there were no unholy motives with Him; He shrank from sin. He loved what was good and hated what was evil—the only One who did. If we do it, it is because we are of His order and because of the Spirit’s work in us, but He inherently loved what was good and hated what was evil; He hated sin, it was abhorrent to Him. Yet on the cross He appropriated our sinful condition.

We cannot understand it. It is as inscrutable as His Person! May the sufferings of Christ in their immensity penetrate into our souls. They were awful because He was under the judgment of God! They could never have been more awful than they were to Him because of what He was in His Person and what He was as Man in His intrinsic holiness and purity. Yet on the cross sin was dealt with to the divine satisfaction and glory.

Christ appropriated what I was, my sinfulness—my every aspiration sinful, every movement of my body and mind and motive and soul inherently sinful as of the flesh—yet He appropriated it! What it meant to Him! Well might He say, “thou art holy, thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel” (Psalm 22: 3). Why? Because at that time He was appropriating what I was, making it His own, shrinking from it as absolutely abhorrent to Him, yet appropriating it or I would never be blessed.

Calvary’s cross was a reality, a tremendous thing to Christ, the greatest thing in the universe that a Person who is divine, and who in manhood was intrinsically holy, should appropriate what I was in my sinfulness—what Scripture calls “sinful flesh”. God hated it; Christ took on what God hated. O, what a Saviour He is! Does it not touch our hearts? Does this not have its repercussion in the service of God, in our testimony and in our lives practically as we meditate on it, the enormity of Christ’s appropriating, making His own, what I was?

It is said in Corinthians that Christ was made sin, but according to Ezekiel He appropriated it, what I was in my sinfulness, with no spark of goodness anywhere in me. Christ appropriated that and made it His own, and God dealt with what I was in Christ, as if He were dealing with me. What amazing grace of God and amazing grace of Christ that He should take that place vicariously, that He should remove what I was, the awful thing—sin—that this should be dealt with before God, His holy requirements met, His throne of majesty met! Instead of God’s judgment resting for ever on me in the lake of fire, God’s eternal favour rests on me. For Ezekiel there was mitigation, but no mitigation for Jesus. He did not ask for it, for if there was mitigation the thing would not have been

done in its totality. He went through the thing in all its awfulness, in all its unutterable woe. What it meant to His holy soul, what strength there was, what might there was in Him! But He did not succumb. The whole matter was settled in three hours.

What those hours were of awful anguish, the awfulness of the forsaking to One who had always known nearness and favour! O, the mystery of redemption, that the One whom God loved, the anointed One, the supreme One, should be forsaken of God! Why? The great question of sin that had intruded in God's universe—He was made that. Jesus was made the thing, "that we might become God's righteousness in him".

A Man going into death

"...but coming to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead they did not break his legs, but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water."

John 19:33-34

How richly we are provided in the four gospels with substance in relation to the death of Christ! John is unique in his presentation of Christ in His death. He does not tell us of the forsaking; he tells us of the glory of the Person and His advancement to death. No one ever advanced to death before. Death had taken everyone, but in John's gospel we have One who advances to death.

Death was abhorrent to God, because it is His judgment upon sin and because it separates from Him. But here in John we see a glorious Person advancing to meet death. All the arrangements were in His hands; not in the hands of death, nor in the hands of the one who had the power of death, but in His own hands—He moves forward to meet death, but first He is thinking of His disciples, sheltering them from the storm which He was about to face, carefully allotting them to safety, then, standing before Pilate in His personal dignity—what a sight! Will Pilate ever forget it? He never will; through all eternity it will haunt his soul that he had that blessed Man before him in all His loveliness and glory, the expression of the truth, and he never took advantage of it!

Here Christ is, conducting His own arrangements, carrying His

cross. Oh, the might and glory of the Son of God, moving forward into death! Oh, the calm tranquillity of His holy mind and soul, giving His mother to John, arranging for her safety in the house of John, the disciple whom He loved, then giving up His spirit. No one was taking His life from Him; He was laying it down of Himself. The

**the foundation of God's
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Prince of life and glory died on the cross. The soldier pierced His side and forthwith came there out blood and water. What blood that was! Well might Peter say it is precious! Well might we say it is precious

—it is blood to cleanse us who are vile, blood to cleanse the universe—what blood that was! Hebrews tells us that He went in “with his own blood” (chapter 9: 12)—that Person with His own blood has gone in to God. The whole moral universe rests on this basis, the precious blood of Christ.

The foundation of our blessing was laid in the work of Christ; the foundation of God's moral universe was laid in the work and blood shedding of Christ. Everything has not come yet into the full value of that blood, but as believers we have. We can approach God as cleansed worshippers, to serve the living God. The basis of our entering the holiest is by the blood of Christ. Every time we approach God we are reminded of the efficacy and preciousness of the blood of Christ; and the whole moral universe will yet come into the application of the blood of Christ. There will be a cleansed universe, nothing unclean, no sin anywhere—all because of the wondrous work of this glorious Person! It is intended to affect our hearts, to attach us to Him, intended that we should shrink from sin and be kept pure and available to God in His will and service, and to serve Him in liberty and power, and to love our Saviour more day by day. May it be so, for His name's sake!

F. W. Trussler

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